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(12) **United States Patent**
Fu et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,452,879 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Sep. 27, 2016**

(54) **SEALED BEVERAGE BASKET AND METHOD OF MAKING**

USPC 99/295, 323; 426/77-84, 115, 394, 426/594-596
See application file for complete search history.

(71) Applicant: **LBP MANUFACTURING LLC**,
Cicero, IL (US)

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Matthew R. Cook, Oak Brook, IL (US)

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(73) Assignee: **LBP Manufacturing LLC**, Cicero

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 791 days.

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(21) Appl. No.: **13/624,169**

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(22) Filed: **Sep. 21, 2012**

(Continued)

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2013/0025466 A1 Jan. 31, 2013

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Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 13/191,219, filed on Jul. 26, 2011, now Pat. No. 9,108,794.

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(60) Provisional application No. 61/538,623, filed on Sep. 23, 2011.

Official Action, dated Sep. 16, 2014, for corresponding Japanese Application No. 2012-532233 (7 pages).

(Continued)

(51) **Int. Cl.**

A47G 19/14 (2006.01)
B65D 85/804 (2006.01)

(Continued)

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(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Dinsmore & Shohl LLP

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **B65D 85/8043** (2013.01); **A47J 31/08** (2013.01); **A47J 31/368** (2013.01); **Y10T 29/49826** (2015.01)

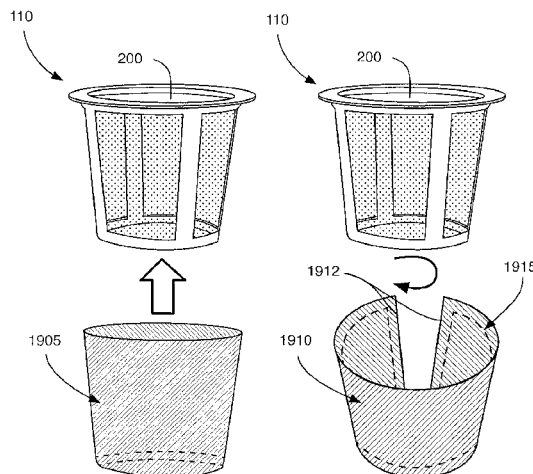
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A basket for holding beverage grounds includes a frame. The frame includes a continuous rim that defines an opening at a top of the frame, a bottom portion that is closed, and a plurality of spaced apart ribs that extend from the rim to a peripheral edge of the bottom portion. The bottom edge, plurality of ribs and rim define a plurality of openings that facilitate fluid flow. A filter material is positioned in the plurality of openings. A removable outer sleeve is formed on an outside surface of the frame. The outer sleeve is configured to cover at least the plurality of openings to thereby provide an air-tight seal within the frame.

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC ... A47G 19/16; A47J 31/3695; B65B 29/06; B65D 85/804; B65D 85/8043; B65D 85/8046; B65D 85/816

16 Claims, 18 Drawing Sheets



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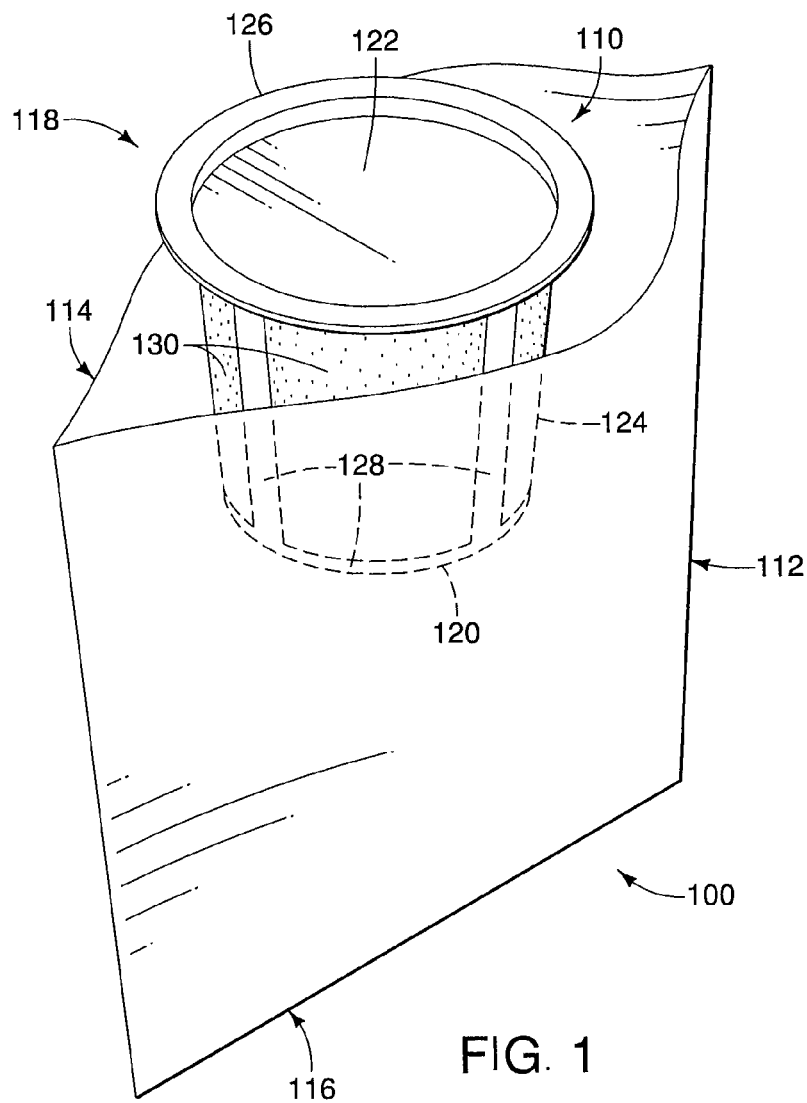
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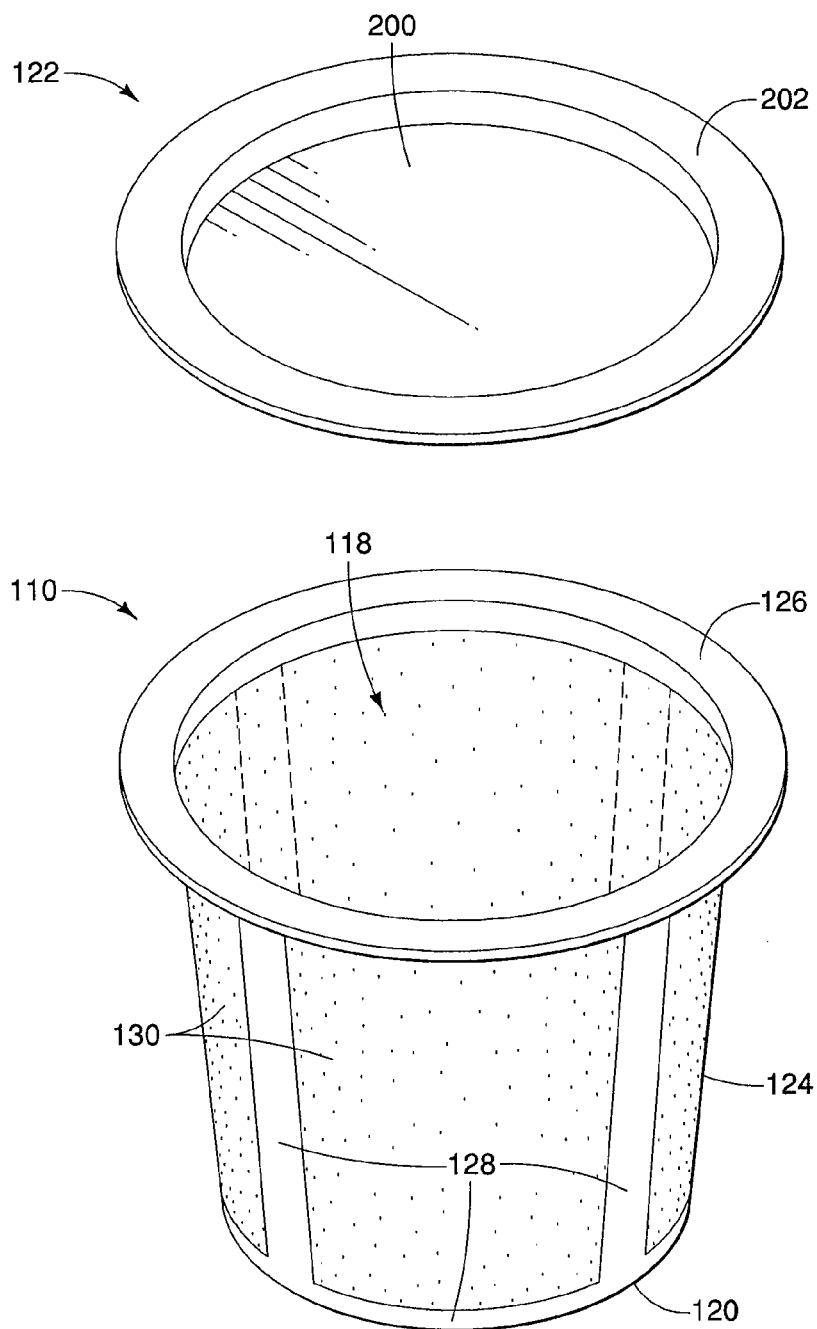


FIG. 2

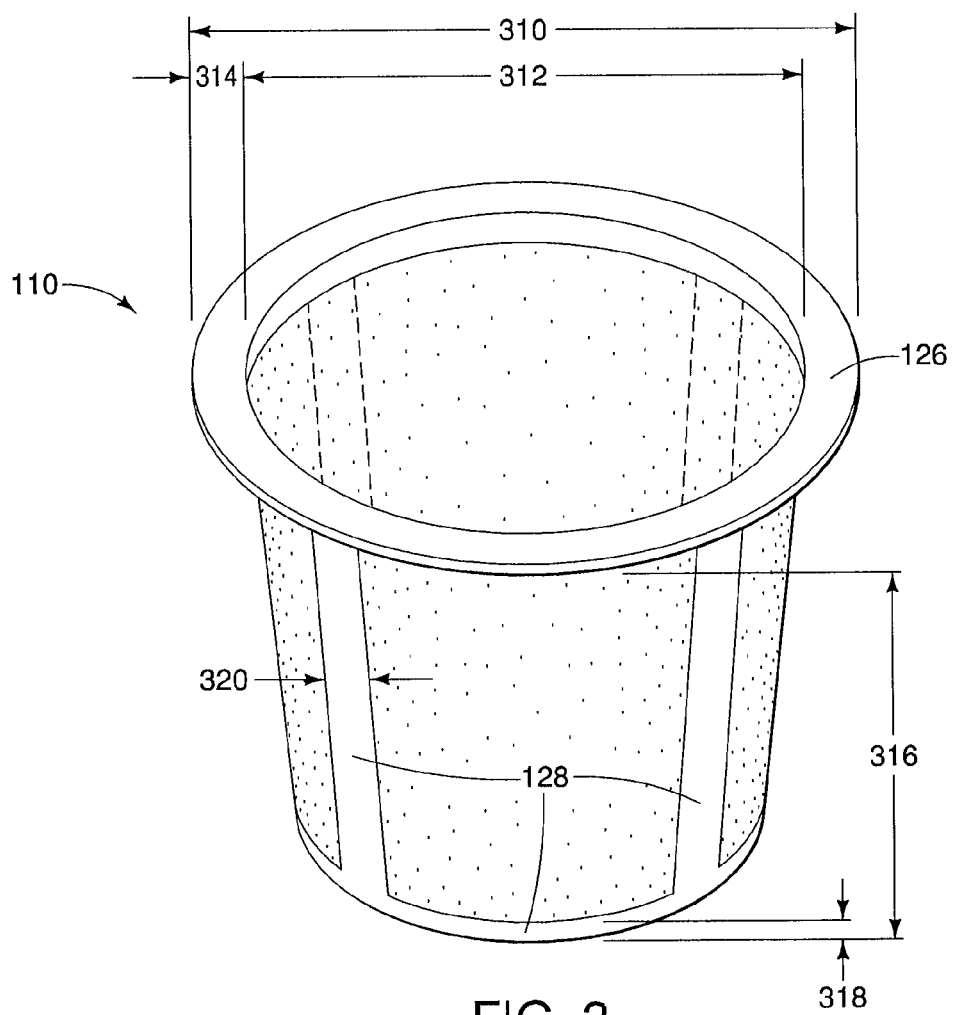


FIG. 3

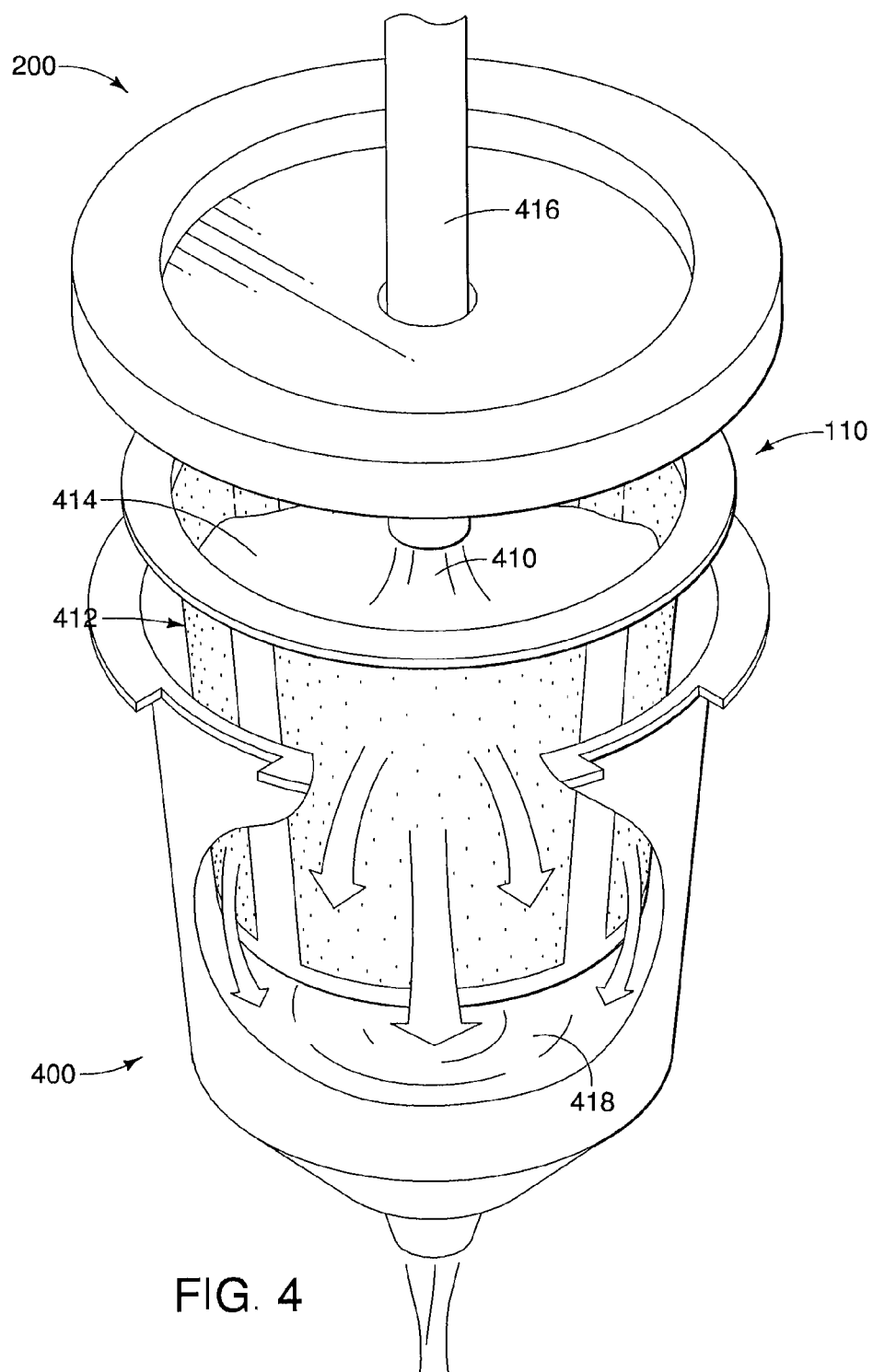


FIG. 4

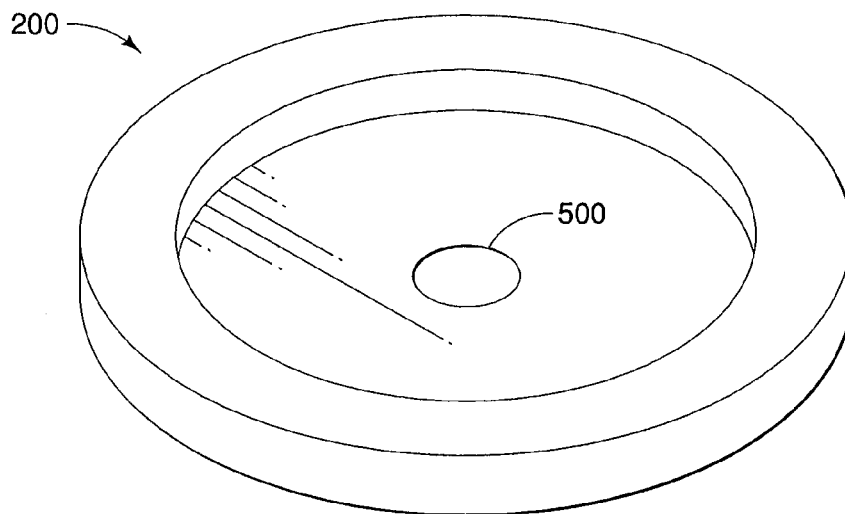


FIG. 5

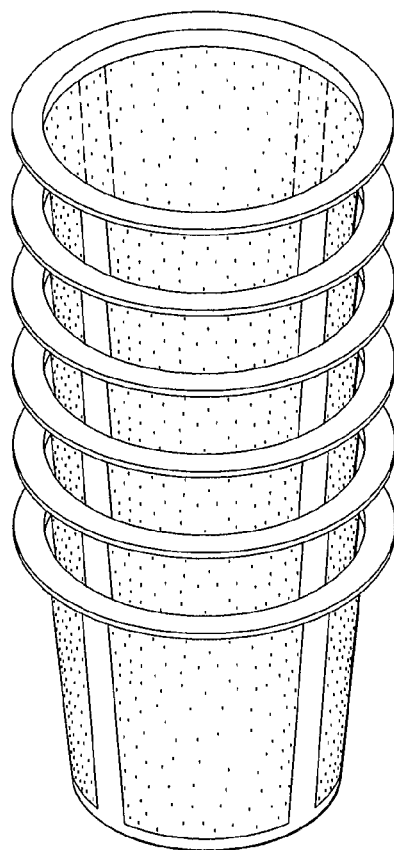


FIG. 6

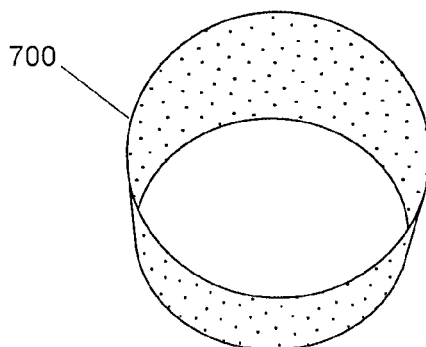


FIG. 7A

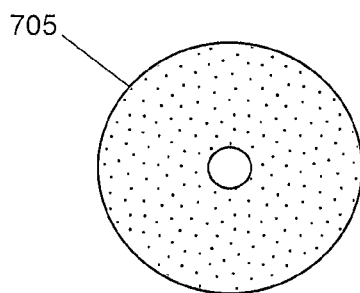


FIG. 7B

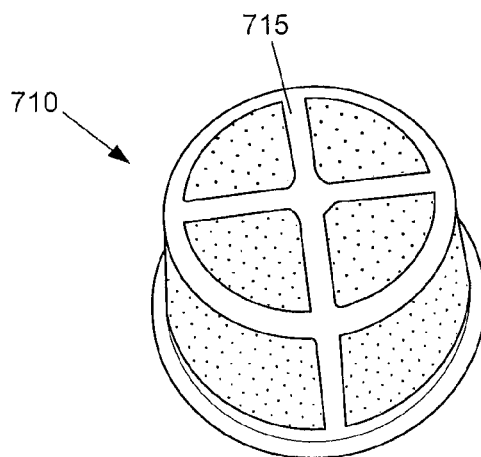
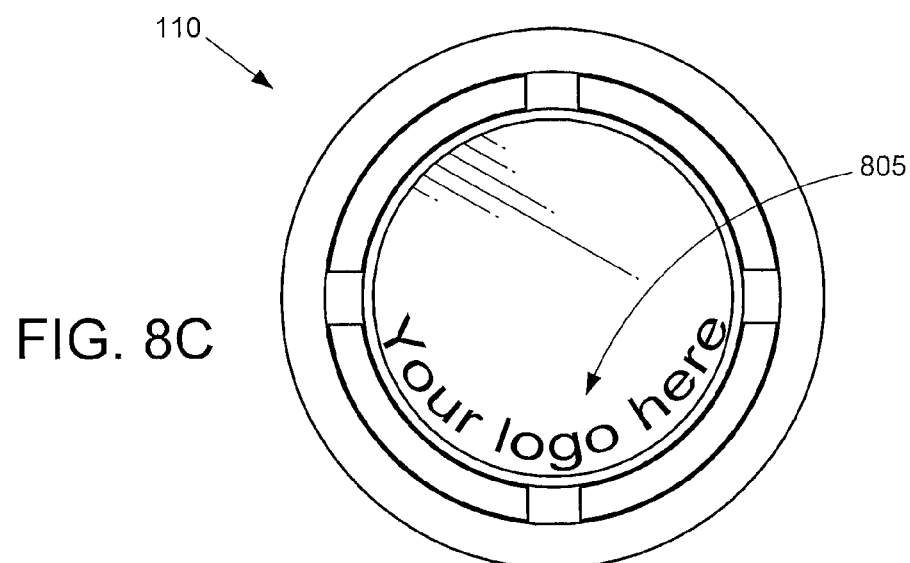
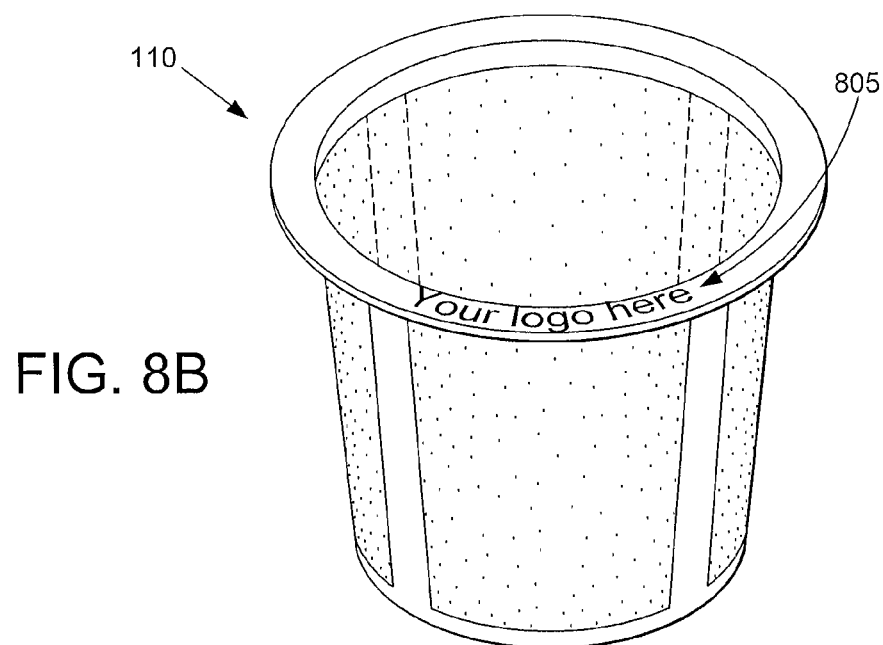
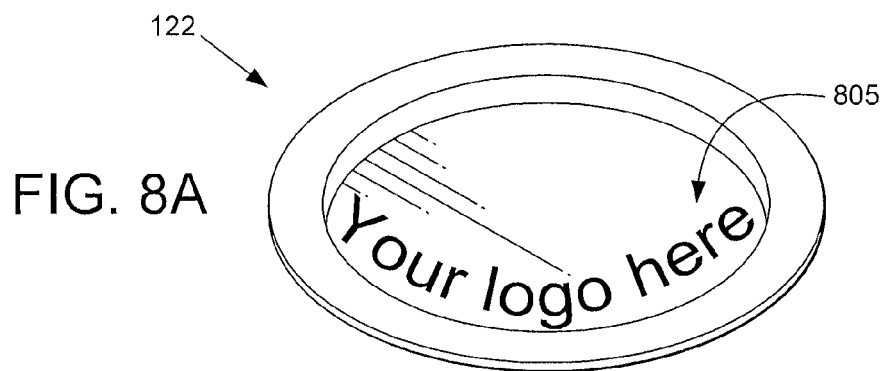


FIG. 7C



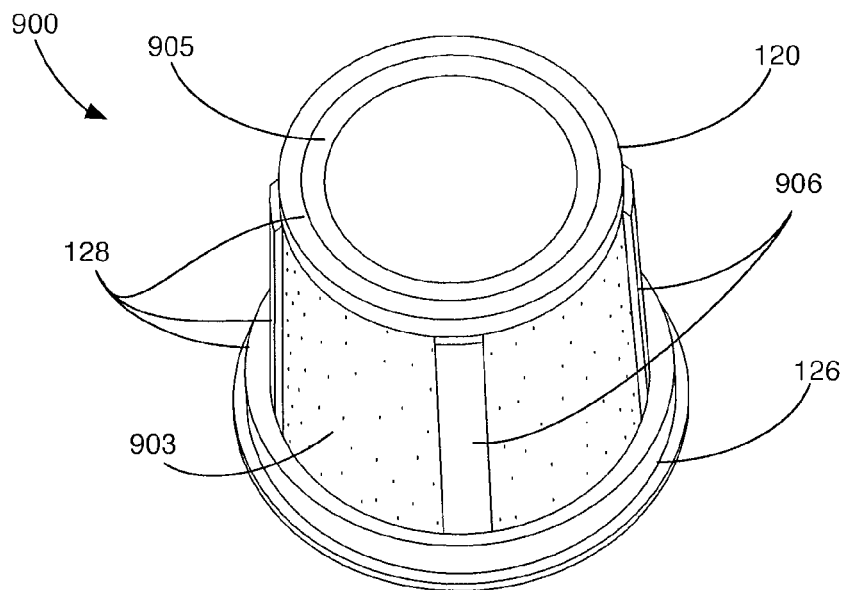


FIG. 9A

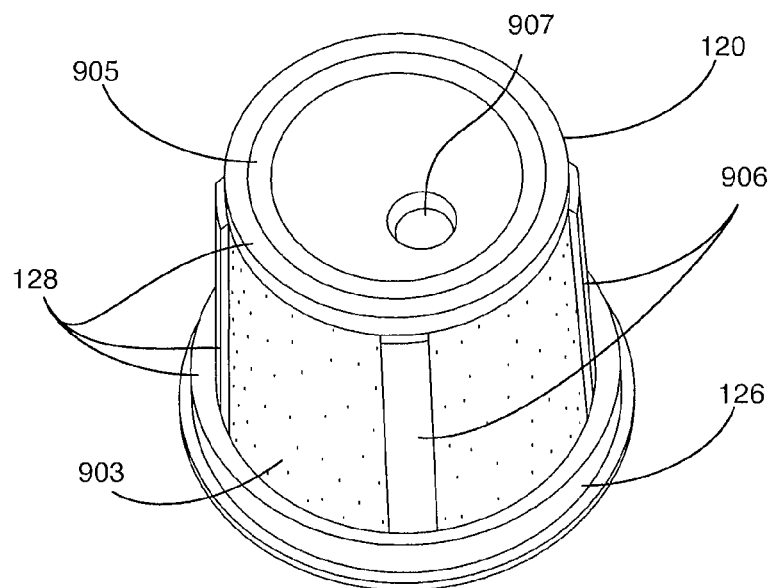


FIG. 9B

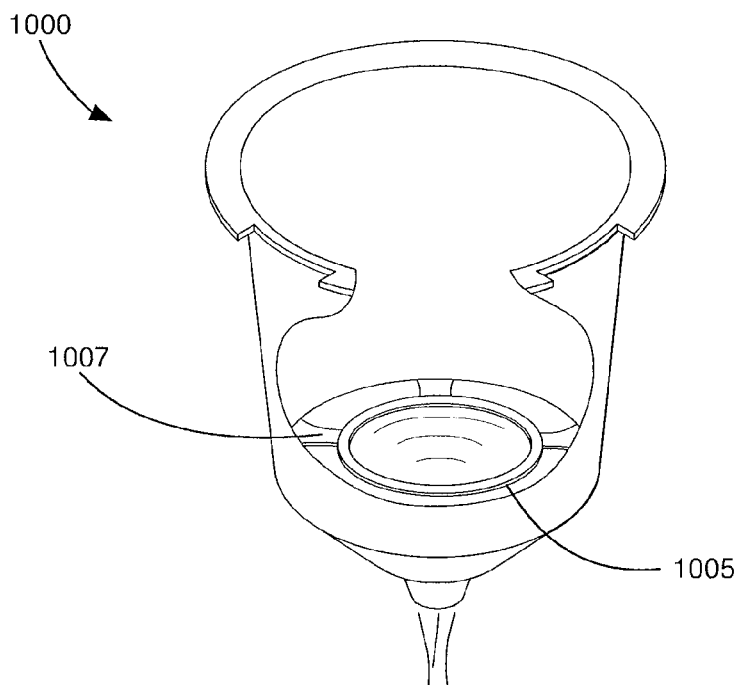


FIG. 10A

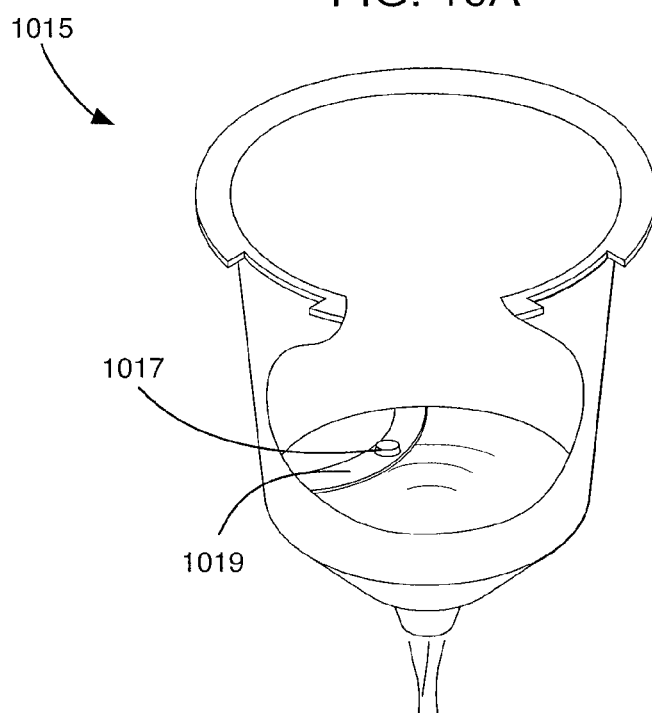


FIG. 10B

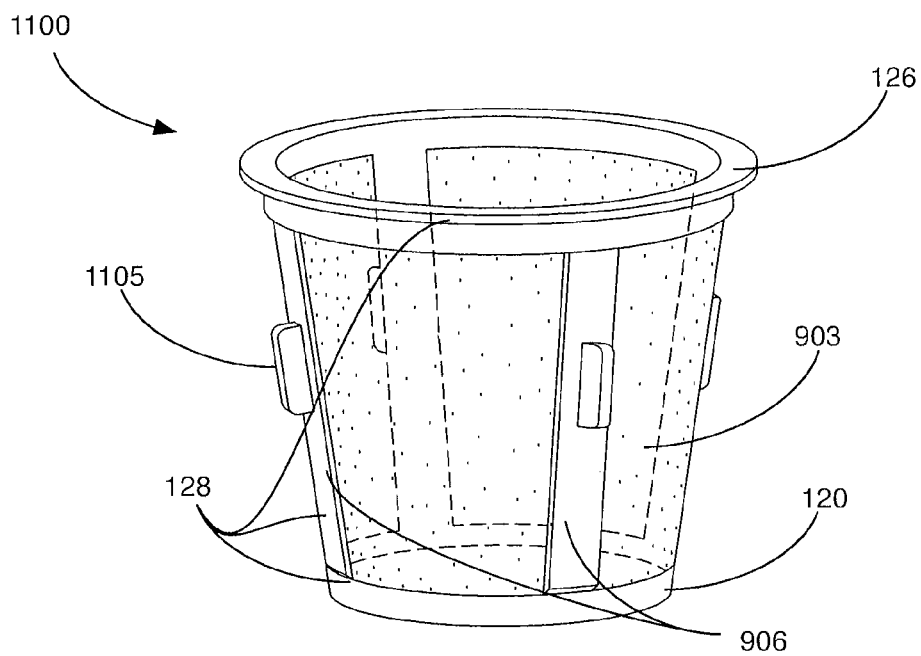


FIG. 11A

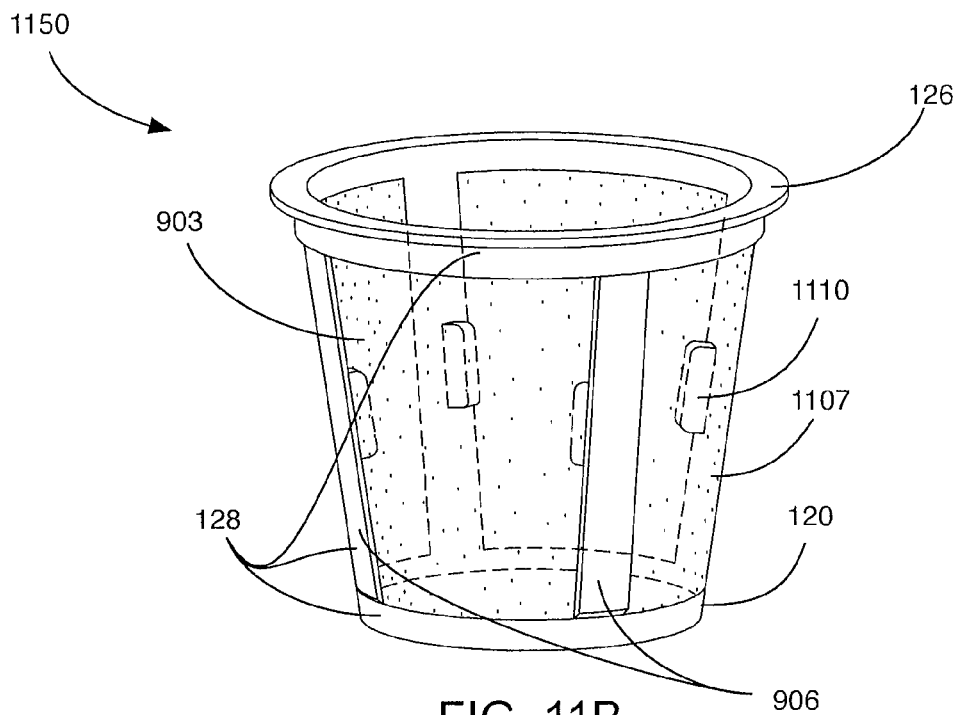


FIG. 11B

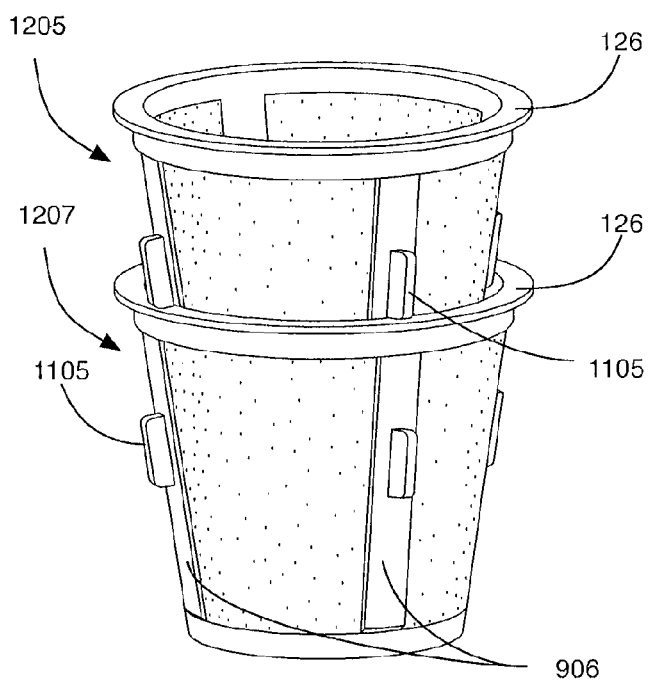


FIG. 12A

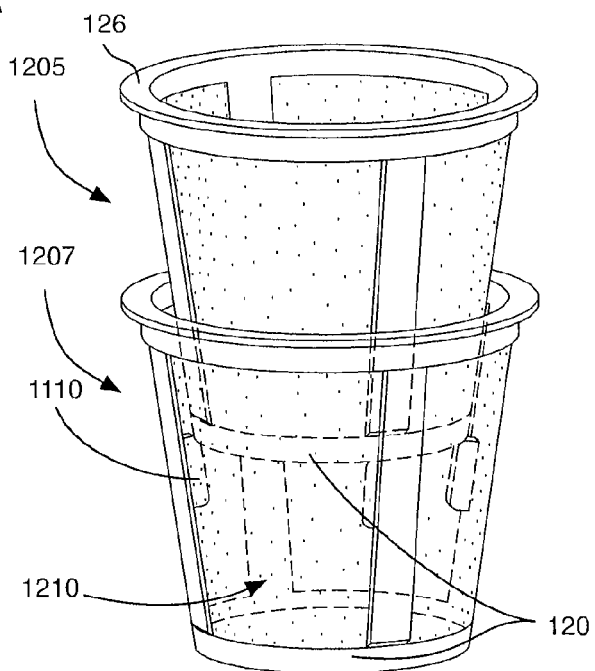


FIG. 12B

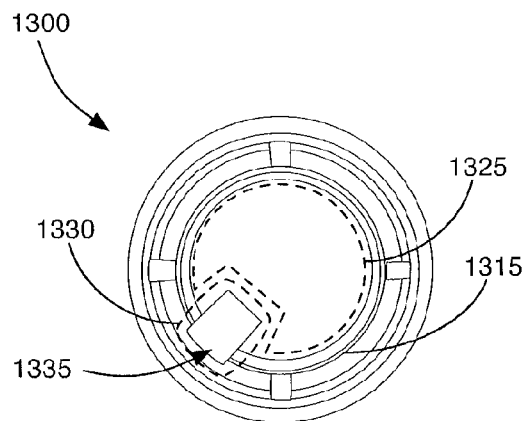
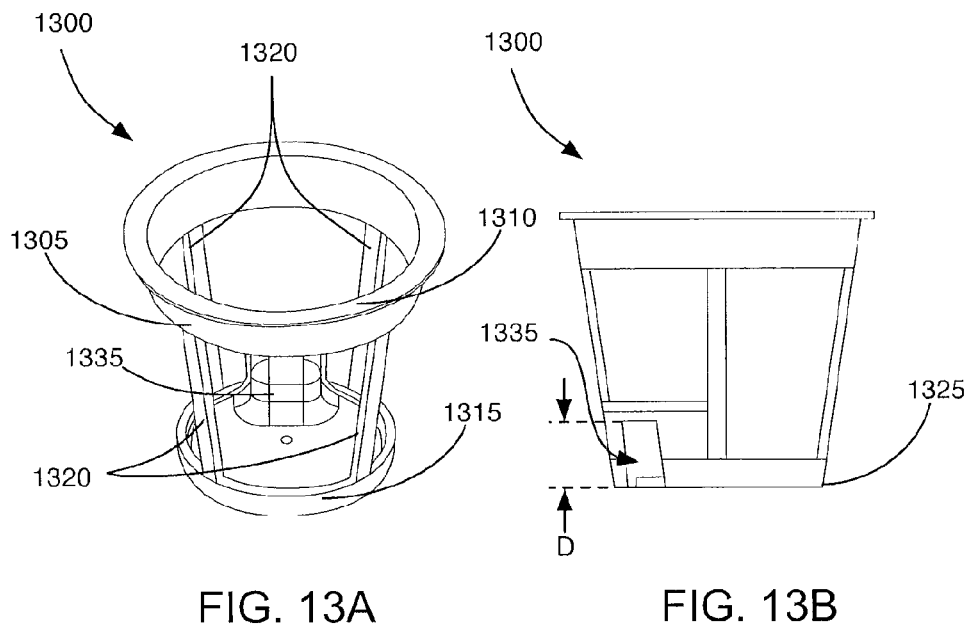


FIG. 13C

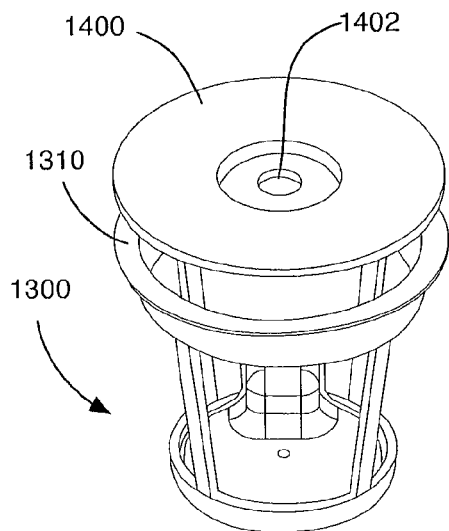


FIG. 14A

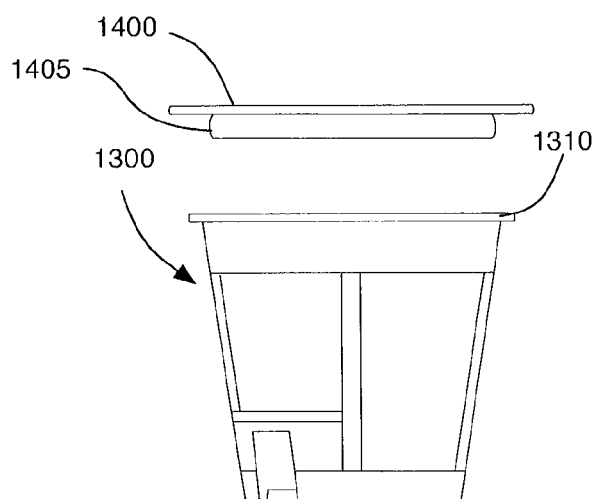


FIG. 14B

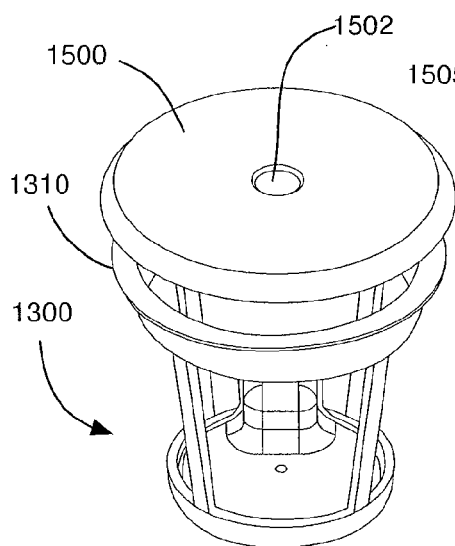


FIG. 15A

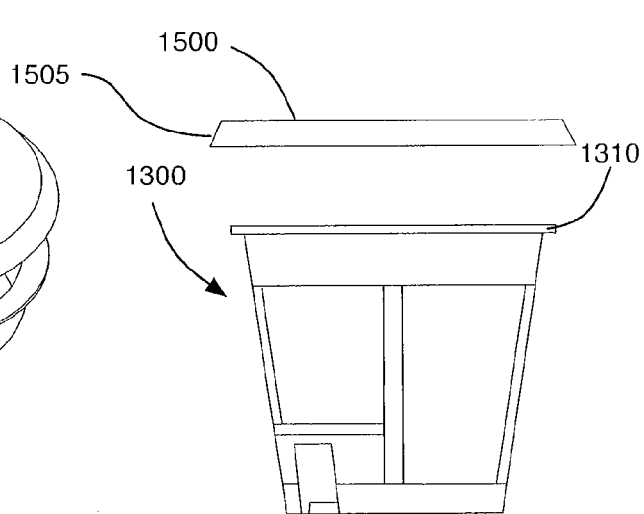


FIG. 15B

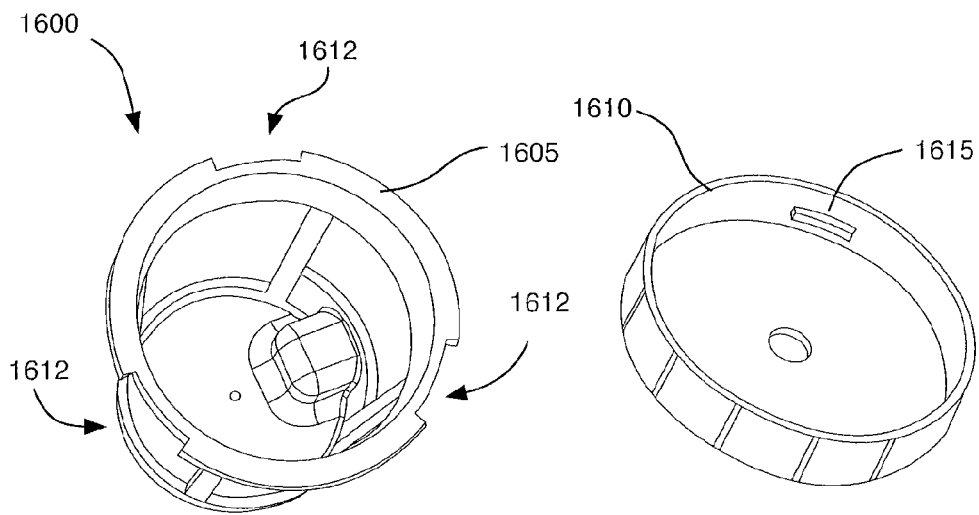


FIG. 16A

FIG. 16B

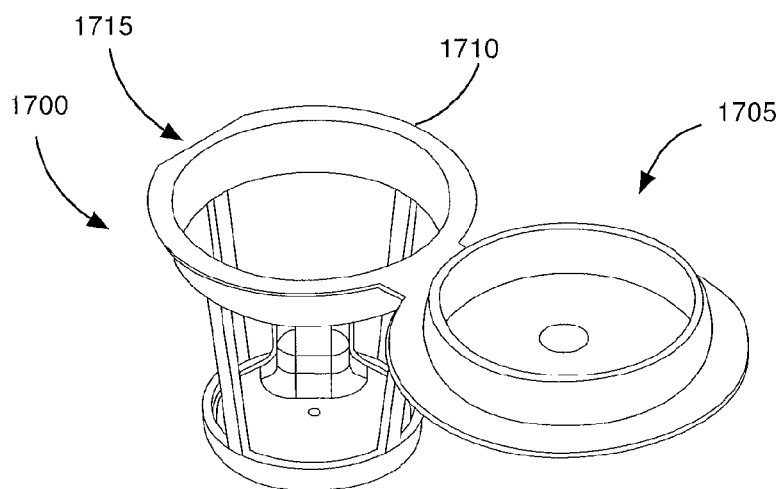


FIG. 17

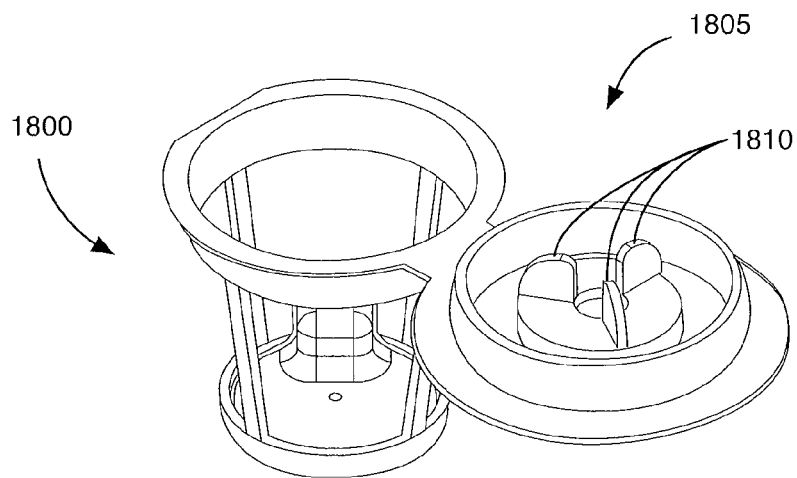


FIG. 18A

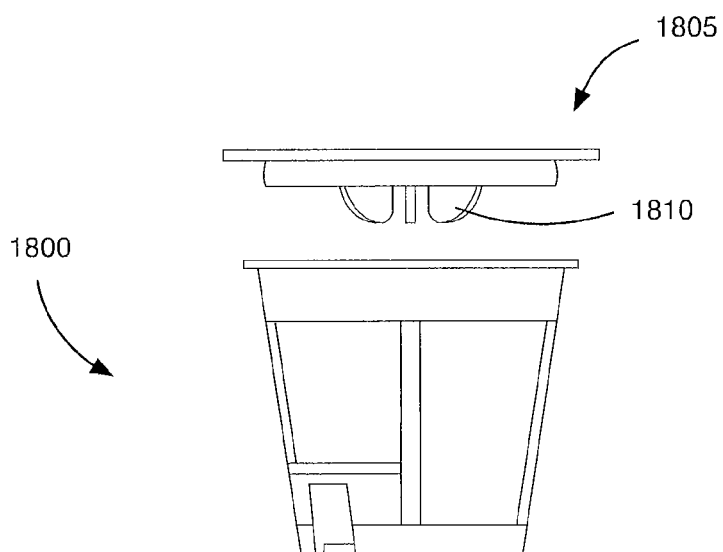


FIG. 18B

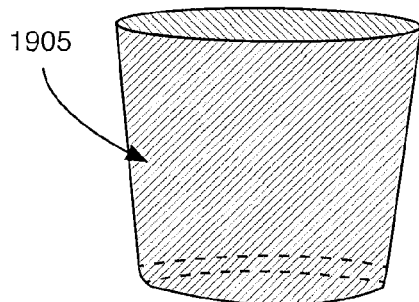
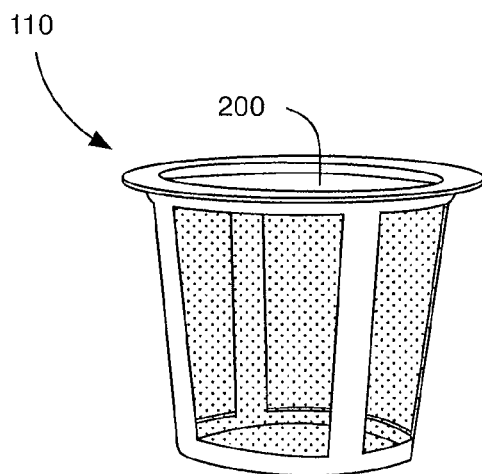


FIG. 19A

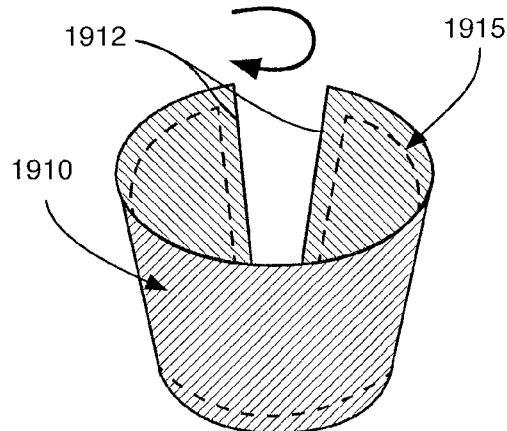
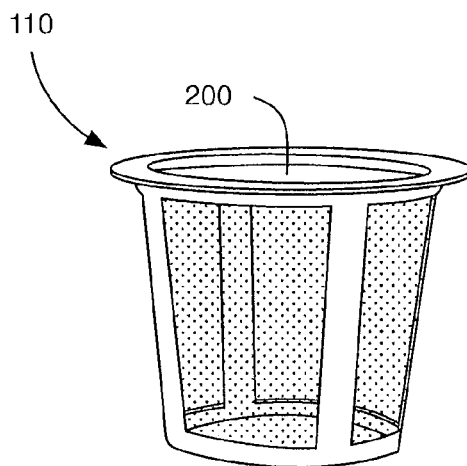


FIG. 19B

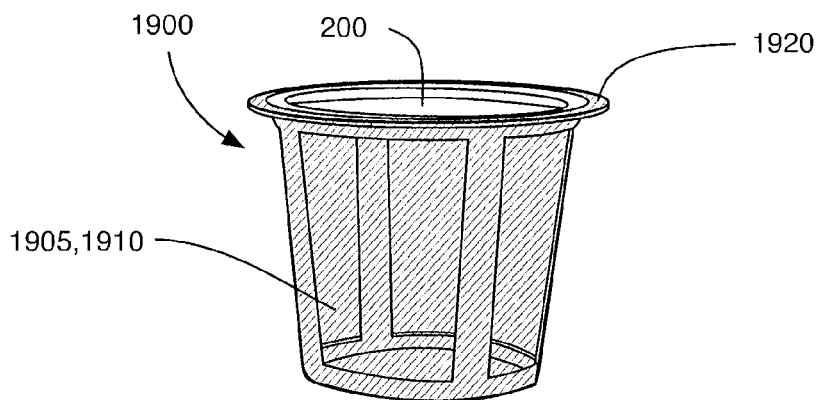


FIG. 19C

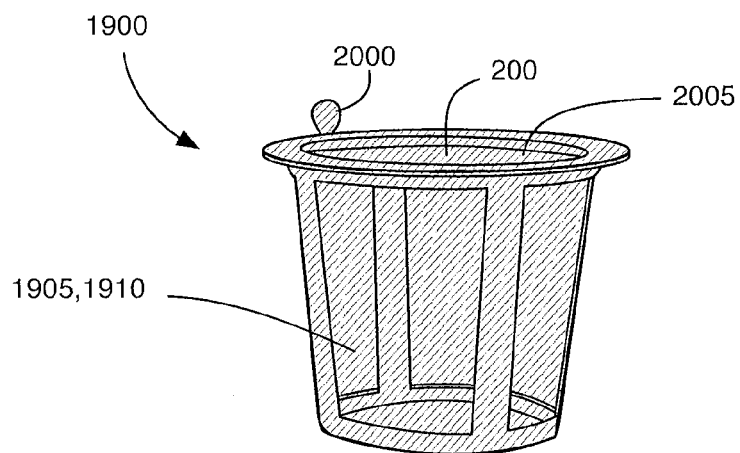


FIG. 20A

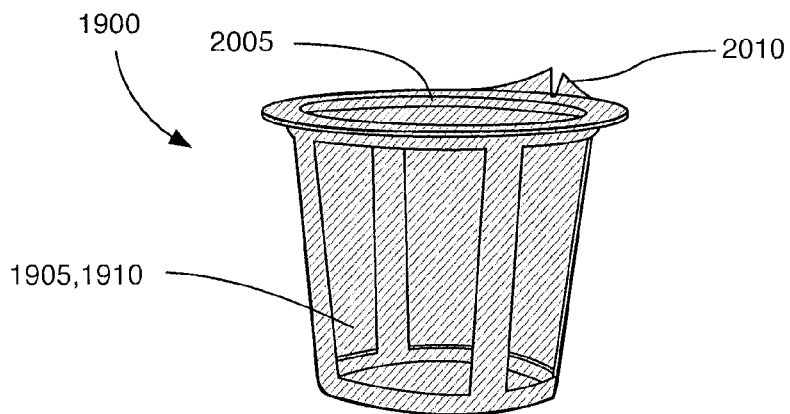


FIG. 20B

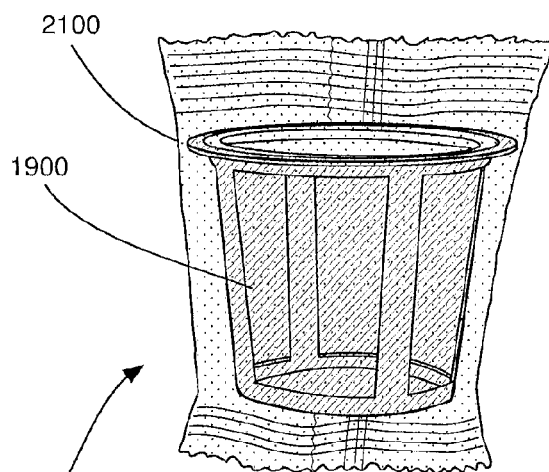


FIG. 21A

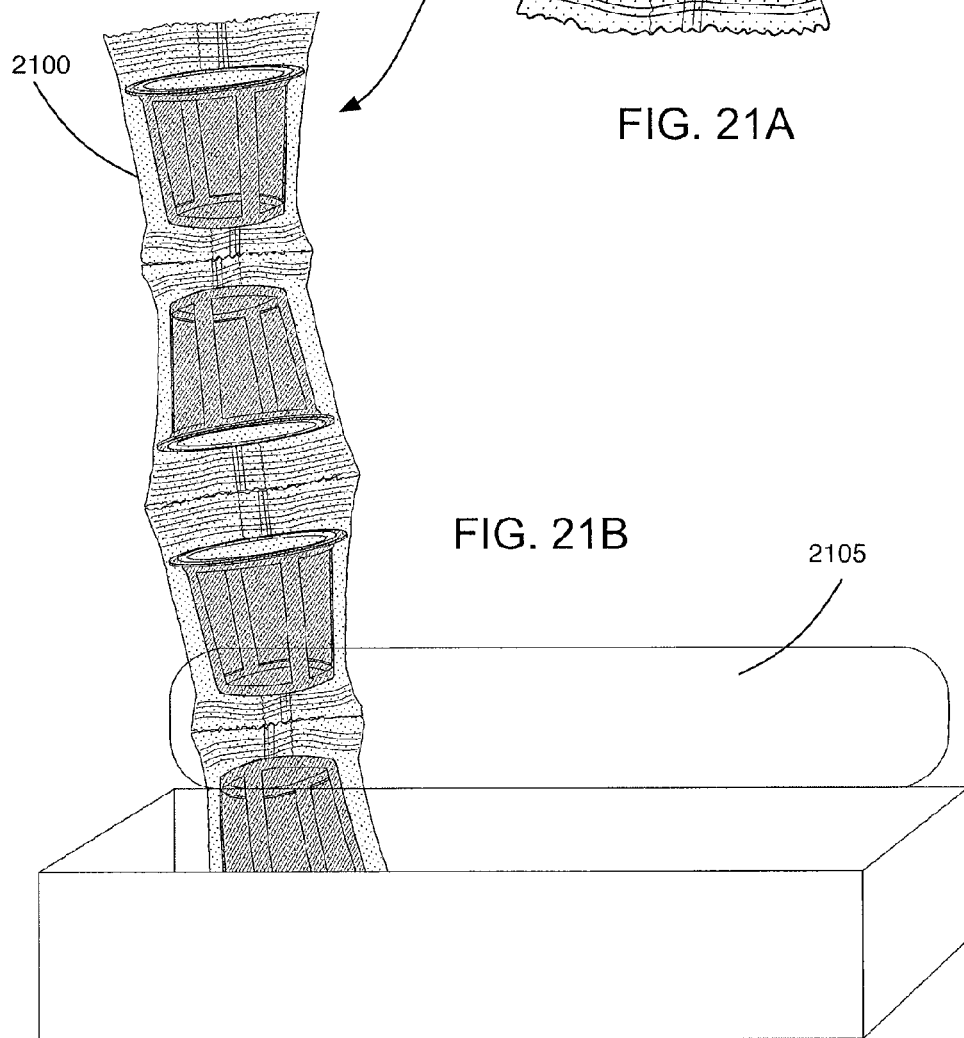


FIG. 21B

1

SEALED BEVERAGE BASKET AND METHOD OF MAKING

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of the filing date under 35 U.S.C. §119 to U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/538,623, filed Sep. 23, 2011, and is also a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 13/191,219, filed Jul. 26, 2011, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 12/889,144, filed Sep. 23, 2010, which claims the benefit of the filing date under 35 U.S.C. §119 to U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/246,796, filed Sep. 29, 2009, the contents of all of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND

Single serve beverage brewing is popular among consumers. There are many formats of single serve brewers on the market. These brewers are designed to quickly brew a single cup of coffee or tea. The coffee or tea grounds are sold in prepared, single serving portions.

Reusable devices for single serve brewers, such as devices with metal or steal filters, may not suitable in some situations. For example, when efficiency is required such as in a busy home, in an office environment, or in a waiting-room environment. Reusable devices require cleaning, which may be complicated by the tendency of beverage grounds to cake into the filter openings. Additionally, to accommodate cleaning of reusable devices, the single serve brewer will be required to be placed near a source of water and a sink or drain. Provision of a sink or drain may be impracticable.

BRIEF SUMMARY

In a first aspect, a basket for holding beverage grounds includes a frame. The frame includes a continuous rim that defines an opening at a top of the frame, a bottom portion that is closed, and a plurality of spaced apart ribs that extend from the rim to a peripheral edge of the bottom portion. The bottom edge, plurality of ribs, and rim define a plurality of openings that facilitate fluid flow. A filter material is positioned in the plurality of openings. A removable outer sleeve is formed on an outside surface of the frame. The outer sleeve is configured to cover at least the plurality of openings to thereby provide an air-tight seal within the frame.

In a second aspect, a beverage package includes a flow wrap material that defines a plurality of sealed pockets, and a beverage basket for storing beverage grounds positioned within each sealed pocket. Each beverage basket includes a frame. The frame includes a continuous rim that defines an opening at a top of the frame, a bottom portion that is closed, and a plurality of spaced apart ribs that extend from the rim to a peripheral edge of the bottom portion. The bottom edge, plurality of ribs, and rim define a plurality of openings that facilitate fluid flow. The beverage basket also includes a filter material positioned in the plurality of openings. A removable outer sleeve is formed on an outside surface of the frame configured to cover at least the plurality of openings to thereby provide an air-tight seal within the frame.

In a third aspect, a method for forming a beverage basket for holding beverage grounds includes forming a frame that includes a continuous rim that defines an opening at a top of the frame, a bottom portion that is closed, and a plurality of spaced apart ribs that extend from the rim to a peripheral

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edge of the bottom. The bottom portion, plurality of ribs, and rim define a plurality of openings that facilitate fluid flow. A filter material is positioned in the plurality of openings. A removable outer sleeve is formed on an outside surface of the frame and is configured to cover at least the plurality of openings to thereby provide an air-tight seal within the frame.

Other systems, methods, features and advantages of the invention will be, or will become, apparent to one with skill in the art upon examination of the following figures and detailed description. It is intended that all such additional systems, methods, features and advantages be included within this description, be within the scope of the invention, and be protected by the following claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 illustrates a disposable beverage portion basket with packaging.

FIG. 2 illustrates a disposable beverage portion basket and lid.

FIG. 3 illustrates a disposable beverage portion basket with exemplary dimensions.

FIG. 4 illustrates use of a disposable beverage portion basket.

FIG. 5 illustrates an exemplary lid for a disposable beverage portion basket.

FIG. 6 illustrates an exemplary package of multiple disposable beverage portion baskets.

FIG. 7A illustrates an exemplary filter medium side portion configured to be molded into a basket.

FIG. 7B illustrates an exemplary filter medium bottom portion, if needed, configured to be molded to a bottom surface of a frame of a basket.

FIG. 7C illustrates an exemplary filter side portion and filter bottom portion molded to a basket.

FIG. 8A illustrates the placement of a logo on the exemplary lid.

FIG. 8B illustrates the placement of a logo of the basket.

FIG. 8C illustrates the placement of a logo on underside of the basket.

FIG. 9A illustrates a disposable beverage portion basket that defines a groove on a bottom portion.

FIG. 9B illustrates a disposable beverage basket that defines a groove and indentation on a bottom portion.

FIG. 10A illustrates an exemplary cartridge with an annular ring used in connection with the beverage basket of FIG. 9A.

FIG. 10B illustrates an exemplary cartridge with a button used in connection with the beverage basket of FIG. 9B.

FIG. 11A illustrates a disposable beverage basket with a group of outwardly extending ledges;

FIG. 11B illustrates a disposable beverage basket with a group of inwardly extending ledges

FIG. 12A illustrates stacking of disposable beverage baskets that include outwardly extending ledges;

FIG. 12B illustrates stacking of disposable beverage portion baskets that include inwardly extending ledges.

FIGS. 13A-13C illustrate perspective, side, and bottom views, respectively, of yet another beverage basket embodiment.

FIGS. 14A and 14B illustrate a first lid embodiment for covering the beverage basket of FIGS. 13A-13C.

FIGS. 15A and 15B illustrate a second lid embodiment for covering the beverage basket of FIGS. 13A-13C.

FIGS. 16A and 16B illustrate a basket and lid that twist lock together.

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FIG. 17 illustrates a basket and lid formed together.

FIGS. 18A and 18B illustrates liquid distribution fins positioned on a lower surface of an exemplary lid.

FIG. 19A illustrates application of a first exemplary sleeve embodiment over a beverage basket.

FIG. 19B illustrates application of a second exemplary sleeve embodiment over a beverage basket.

FIG. 19C illustrates a sealed beverage basket embodiment.

FIG. 20A illustrates a sealed beverage basket embodiment that includes a tab for removing an outer sleeve.

FIG. 20B illustrates a sealed beverage basket embodiment that includes a notch for removing an outer sleeve.

FIG. 21A illustrates a beverage packet.

FIG. 21B illustrates a string of beverage packets.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Single serve beverage brewing is popular among consumers due to the convenience and flexibility that it provides. Many single serve beverage brewers have entered the market. Traditional brewers typically produce between four and twenty cups of beverage at a time. The beverage sits on a hot plate until it is consumed. As time passes, the taste of the beverage may decline. Single serve brewing allows a consumer to enjoy beverages, such as coffee and tea, in an efficient fashion and without a decline in the taste profile of the beverage.

In FIG. 1, coffee or tea grounds for use in a single serving brewer may be packaged in a disposable single use beverage package 100. A disposable single use beverage package 100 may include a basket 110, which may be a permeable basket and barrier 112, which may be a disposable impermeable barrier.

The barrier 112 may have a first side 114 and a second side 116. The first side 114 may include a score, a tab, a zip, an embedded string, or otherwise provide a means for assisting a user to open the barrier 112. The barrier 112 may be sealed at the second side 116 or other sides by gusseting, pinching, heat sealing, stapling, or otherwise. Alternatively or additionally, the barrier 112 may be a shrink wrap barrier or a wax barrier, among others.

The barrier 112 may be substantially resistant to the passage of liquids, gases, and solids. For example, the barrier 112 may be hermetically sealed to block moisture and oxygen from entering the pouch and to retain the aroma of the coffee. Additionally or alternatively, several baskets may be prefilled and packaged together in an egg crate type configuration, a tube, or other packaging, to maintain freshness during shipping and storing. The barrier 112 may be made of materials such as foil laminate, metalized films, EVOH films, polyolefin based material, parafilm, plastics, and combinations of these, among others.

A user may open the package 100, for example, by tearing the barrier 112 along the first side 114 to reveal the basket 110. The user may remove the basket 110 from the barrier 112 and place the basket 110 into a single serve brewer. The basket 110 may be prefilled with grounds, or alternatively, the user may add grounds to the basket 110.

The basket 110 may be a single-wall permeable basket including a first end 118, which may be reversibly closed or an open end, and a second end 120, which may be a closed end. The basket 110 may be a cup shaped basket and may be used with a lid 122. The basket 110 may also have a side wall 124 and a rim 126. The side wall 124 may connect the second end 120 and the rim 126. The side wall 124 may include a frame 128 and a filter medium 130.

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The frame 128 may provide structure, stability, and integrity to the filter medium 130. The frame 128 may be formed by injection molding or by a different process suitable for manufacturing a rigid form around a relatively flexible filter medium. The frame 128 may be made of any one of many commercially available materials, such as polystyrene, polyethylene, polypropylene, polyester, polyamide or Nylon, or other synthetic or natural plastics or combinations thereof. The frame 128 may be made from other materials such as a bio-based polymer, such as polylactic acid (PLA), poly hydroxybutyric acid (PHA) or a starch based polymer. The frame 128 may be made of other materials known to those skilled in the art.

In FIG. 2, the side walls 124 of the basket 110 may be defined by the frame 128 and a filter medium 130. The filter medium 130 may be secured to the basket 110, for example, at the second end 120, the rim 126, and/or at that frame 128. The filter medium 130 may be secured for example, by thermal bonding of the plastic used for the frame 128, or with an adhesive, by crimping, by heat sealing, or any other way. The filter medium 130 may be secured in the frame 128 in insert-injection molding of the plastic frame around a filter medium insert. For example, a pre-die cut blank of filter medium may be placed on a mandrel which has channels around the shape of the pre die-cut blank. Molten plastic may flow in and bond to the blank of the filter medium 130 during inert-injection molding. The plastic may solidify into the frame 128, for example, upon cooling. Referring to FIGS. 7A-7C, in an alternative embodiment the filter medium 700 and 705 may be first formed into a generally cylindrical and tapered portion 700 and an optional bottom circular filter medium 705 herein after referred to as the circular portion 705. The filter medium 700 and 705 may then be placed or inserted onto a mold for insert injection molding to form the basket 710 with the filter media 700 and 705 supported by the frame of the basket 710. The bottom end 715 of the frame of the basket 710 may be substantially open and a circular filter portion 705 may cover the open portions.

The filter medium 130 may be a porous material and may be permeable to liquids and some oils. It may be formed of many materials, for example, non-woven materials such as polystyrene, polyethylene, polypropylene, polylactic acid, cellulosic fibers, polyhydroxyalkanoates, thermoplastic starch, filter paper, other paper materials, polymer materials, a combination of these or any other material. The filter medium 130 may also be formed from a polymer or plastic filtration mesh, or microporous or apertured films made of various plastic materials, such as polypropylene, Nylon 6 and high density polyethylene or other materials known to those skilled in the art. Alternatively, the filter medium 130 may be formed from a bio-based polymer, such as polylactic acid (PLA), poly hydroxybutyric acid (PHA) or starch based polymer.

Characteristics of the filter medium 130 may be selected to meet the filtration needs of different products, such as ground coffee, tea powders or leaves, or other brewed products. For example, the basis weight, thickness, strand count, mesh size, flow rate and strength of the filter medium 130 may be selected based on the product to be brewed.

The filter medium 130 may be compostable, biodegradable, recycled, and/or recyclable. If the filter medium 130 is a non-woven material, it may have a greater resistance than, for example, a woven material or a metal filter. A non-woven filter medium 130 may retain water in the basket for longer than, for example, a woven or metal filter. The length of time that the water is retained in the basket with the grounds may

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influence the strength and therefore the taste profile of the resulting beverage. This may be because a woven material or a metal material may have technological limitations on the size of the openings there through. A non-woven material may not have the same technological limitations. Therefore, the difference may be that, in a woven material or metal material, the path of the water may be straight through the wall and in the non-woven material, the path may be indirect and convoluted.

The basket **110** may include a lid **122**. The lid **122** may include a rim **202** and a cover **200**. The cover **200** may be disposed below the rim **202** for secure fitting with the basket **110**. Alternatively, the cover **200** may not include a rim **202**. The cover **200** may be made from a material that may be punctured to allow a liquid to enter into the basket. For example, the cover **200** may be a material, such as a foil, film, coated film, or multilayer laminate, which is sealed to or across the rim **126** of the permeable basket **110** to maintain contents therein. The cover **200** may keep dry contents dry, wet contents wet, and may maintain a freshness of the contents. The cover **200** may be formed of a plastic, metallic foil, filter material, thermoplastic starch, or a laminate or composite thereof.

The basket **110** may be dimensioned for use with a commercial single serve coffee brewer. FIG. 3 shows an exemplary basket **110**. The basket **110** may have width of the open end **312**, and a height **316**. The open end **312** may be, for example but not limited to, about 38-42 mm. The height **316** may be, for example but not limited to, 38-42 mm. The rim **126** may have a dimension **314** of, for example but not limited to, 3.5-5.5 mm. The frame **128** may have a dimension **320** of, for example but not limited to, 5 mm, and a dimension **318** of, for example but not limited to 2 mm. These dimensions are merely exemplary and not limiting. The basket **110** may also have other dimensions or shapes, for example, dimensions that permit use in various single serve beverage machines.

In FIG. 4, a basket **110** may be prefilled with beverage grounds **414**, for example but not limited to, coffee or tea grounds. Alternatively or additionally, the basket **110** may be loaded with beverage grounds **414** immediately prior to use. If the basket **110** is prefilled with beverage grounds **414** it may be sealed with a lid **122**. Alternatively, if the permeable basket **110** is not preloaded with beverage grounds **414**, it may not have a lid **122**, additionally or alternatively; it may have a removable lid **122**, or otherwise.

During use, a user may open the barrier **112**, take out the basket **110** and place the basket **110** into a single serve beverage machine. A heated liquid **410** may be received by the basket **110** through an opening in the cover **200** or otherwise. For example, during use, a preloaded basket **110** may be placed inside a cartridge **400** for a single serve beverage machine. The cartridge **400** may be reusable or disposable. During a brewing cycle, the cover **200** may be pierced by a probe **416** to admit heated liquid **410** into the basket **110**. The heated liquid may interact with the beverage grounds **414** creating a beverage medium. The beverage medium **418** may flow through the filter medium **130** and exit through an opening in the cartridge **400**.

As a second example, during use, an unloaded permeable basket **110** may be placed inside a cartridge **400** for a single serve beverage machine. The cartridge **400** may be reusable or disposable. The beverage grounds **414** may be placed into the basket **110**. A cover **200** may be attached to maintain the contents of the basket **110**. During a brewing cycle, the cover **200** may be pierced by a probe **416** to admit heated liquid **410** into the basket **110**. The heated liquid may interact with

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the beverage grounds **414** creating a beverage medium. The beverage medium **414** may flow through the filter medium **130** and exit through an opening in the cartridge **400**. Alternatively, no cover **200** may be required. In this case, the heated liquid **410** will flow directly into the basket **110**.

FIG. 5 illustrates one example of a lid **122** for a basket **110**. The cover **200** of the lid **122** may include an opening **500** for entry of a liquid probe. The opening **500** may be a weakened portion of the material of the cover **200** which may give easily under the pressure of a probe.

In FIG. 6, unloaded tapered baskets **110** may be configured for efficient nesting. The baskets **110** may be sold nested in a stack or tube, which may be packed in a sleeve of plastic film, or otherwise. The unloaded basket **110** may allow the end user to select a variety of beverage grounds **414** for use in their single serve brewer. The end user may also be able to modify the amount of beverage grounds **414** for use in their single serve brewer.

The components of the single use beverage package **100** may be selected with the intention of creating an environmentally friendly product. For example, the filter medium **130** may be made from a range of synthetic or biodegradable, recycled or recyclable, or compostable materials such as polyolefins, polylactic acid, cellulose, polyhydroxyalkanoates, thermoplastic starch, a combination of these or other materials. The basket frame **128** material, cover **200** and barrier **112** may also be made out of these materials or similar synthetic, biodegradable, recycled or recyclable, or compostable materials which retain the properties of structural integrity (e.g., frame **128**) and impermeability (e.g., barrier **112**).

While various embodiments of the embodiments have been described, it will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that many more embodiments and implementations are possible that are within the scope of the claims. For example, referring to FIGS. 8A-8C, logos **805** of various configurations may be placed on the lid **122** (FIG. 9A), the basket **110** (FIG. 8B), or the underside of the basket **110**. The logos **805** may also be printed on the filter medium **130**. The logos **805** enable a vendor to, for example, place descriptive information about the product that is in the basket, such as whether the product is coffee or tea, a type of blend, and the like. Other information known to those skilled in the art may also be printed.

FIGS. 9A-10B illustrate yet other embodiments of disposable beverage baskets. FIG. 9A and FIG. 9B illustrate beverage basket embodiments configured to control the positioning of the basket within a cartridge or brewer. Referring to FIG. 9A, the beverage basket **900** (shown upside down) includes a frame **128** and filter material **903**. The frame **128** includes a rim **126**, a bottom portion **120**, and a group of ribs **906**. The rim **126** defines an opening that corresponds to the top of the frame **128** when the frame **128** is in an upright position. The rim **126** may be continuous and have a circular shape, oval shape, or a different shape. The bottom portion **120** is a closed surface that corresponds to the bottom of the frame **128**. The ribs **906** extend from the rim **126** to the edge of the bottom portion **120**. The ribs **906**, rim **126**, and bottom portion **120** define a group of openings that facilitate fluid flow, such as coffee, tea, or a different beverage.

The bottom portion **120** defines a groove **905** and/or an indentation **907** (See FIG. 9B). The groove **905** may extend in a continuous manner along and inward of the edge of the bottom portion **120**. The groove **905** and/or indentation **907** are configured to cooperate with a complementary feature, e.g., a protruded needle in the bottom of a cartridge or

brewer to accurately position the basket 900 within the cartridge or brewer. That is the groove 905 and/or indentation 907 are configured to mesh with a complementary feature of the cartridge or brewer to control alignment of the basket 900 so that the outer walls of the basket 900 are not up against inner walls of the cartridge or brewer during use, which could otherwise limit fluid flow through the basket 900.

FIG. 10A and FIG. 10B, illustrate exemplary cartridges 1000 and 1015 with alignment features. The same alignment features may be provided in a brewer independently of a cartridge. Referring to FIG. 10A, the feature corresponds to an annular ring 1005. The annular ring 1005 may be suspended within the cartridge by one or more bridge members 1007 to facilitate fluid flow around the annular ring 1005. The annular ring 1005 may be sized to fit within the groove 905 of the beverage basket 900. In a brewer implementation, the annular ring 1007 may be formed in a portion of the brewer configured to receive the beverage basket 900. In other implementations, the annular ring 1005 and one or more bridge members 1007 may correspond to a separate component configured to fit substantially near the bottom of the cartridge 1000 or brewer and to maintain a distance between sidewalls of the cartridge 1000 or brewer.

Referring to FIG. 10B, the feature corresponds to a button 1017. The button 1017 may be sized to fit within the indentation 907, described above. The button 1017 may be supported by a bridge member 1019 to enable fluid flow around the button 1017. In a brewer implementation, the button 1017 may be formed in a portion of the brewer configured to receive the beverage basket 900. In other implementations, the button 1017 and bridge member 1019 may correspond to a separate component configured to fit substantially near the bottom of the cartridge 1015 or brewer and to maintain a distance between sidewalls of the cartridge 1015 or brewer.

FIG. 11A and FIG. 11B illustrate beverage basket embodiments 1100 and 1150 configured to be stacked. Referring to FIG. 11A, the beverage basket 1100 includes a frame 128 and filter material 903, as describe above. For example, the frame includes a rim 126, a bottom portion 120, and a group of ribs 906. The rim 126 defines an opening that corresponds to the top a top of the frame 128. The rim 126 may be continuous and have a circular shape, oval shape, or a different shape. The bottom portion 120 is a closed surface that corresponds to the bottom of the frame 128. The ribs 906 extend from the rim 126 to the edge of the bottom portion 120. The ribs 906, rim 126, and bottom portion 120 define a group of openings that facilitate fluid flow, such as coffee, tea, or a different beverage.

Each rib 906 includes a ledge 1105 and 1110 (FIG. 11B) positioned in a center region. The ledges 1105 and 1110 are configured to limit an amount by which respective baskets 1100 and 1150 are insertable into one another. Limiting the insertion amount results in a space 1210 (FIG. 12B) between respective bottoms 120 of the baskets 1100 and 1150. The space 1210 may be sized to facilitate storage of beverage grounds, such as coffee ground, tea grounds, or other grounds, which the baskets 1100 and 1150 are stacked. That is, the position of the ledges 1105 and 1210 along the ribs 906 may be configured to result in a desired amount of space 1210 between respective baskets. Thus, several baskets may be advantageously filled with grounds and then stacked to save space.

In some configurations, the ledge 1105 extends outwardly away from the center of the basket. (See FIG. 11A). Referring to FIG. 12A, in this configuration, the ledge 1105 of a

top basket 1205 rests upon the rim 126 of a lower basket 1207. In this regard, the distance between opposing ledges 1105 (i.e., ledges 1105 on opposite sides of the basket 1100) may be equal to about the inner diameter of the rim 126.

In other configurations, the ledge 1110 extends inwardly towards the center of the basket. (See FIG. 11B). Referring to FIG. 12B, in this configuration, the bottom portion 120 of the top basket 1205 rests upon the ledge 1110 of the lower basket 1207. In this regard, the distance between opposing ledges 1110 (i.e., ledges 1105 on opposite sides of the basket 1100) may be equal to about the outer diameter of the bottom portion 120.

FIGS. 13A-13C illustrate perspective, side, and bottom views, respectively, of yet another beverage basket embodiment 1300. The beverage basket 1300 is configured to be placed into a brewer (not shown) without the need for a cartridge 400. Such brewers typically include a receiving member sized to receive a basket with a similar although not identical shape. A protruded membrane-piercing needle is positioned in the lower portion of the receiving member and is configured to pierce the lower portion of a typical plastic cup (e.g., a generally cylindrically shaped cup with a flat and closed bottom surface) so as to facilitate fluid flow out of the basket, through the needle, and then into a cup.

The beverage basket embodiment 1300 includes a frame 1305. The frame 1305 includes a rim 1310, a bottom portion 1315, and a group of ribs 1320. The rim 1310 defines an opening that corresponds to the top of the frame 1305 when the frame 1305 is in an upright position. The rim 1310 may be continuous and have a circular shape, oval shape, or a different shape. The bottom portion 1315 is a closed surface that corresponds to the bottom of the frame 1305. The ribs 1320 extend from the rim 1310 to the edge of the bottom portion 1315. The ribs 1320, rim 1310, and bottom portion 1315 define a group of openings that facilitate fluid flow, such as coffee, tea, or a different beverage. The beverage basket embodiment 1300 also includes a filter material that covers the openings, such as any of the filter materials described above, which is not shown in this instance for clarity.

A first portion 1325 (FIG. 13C) of the bottom portion 1315 is substantially flat. Whereas a second portion 1330 of the bottom portion 1315 defines an indentation 1335, which can be either fully enclosed or semi enclosed. The first portion 1325 may occupy $\frac{3}{4}$ or more of the surface area of the bottom portion 1315. The second portion 1330 may occupy the remaining area. The indentation 1335 is sized so that when the basket 1300 is inserted into the receiving member, the membrane-piercing needle fits within the indentation 1335 and does not pierce the bottom portion 1315. For example, a depth D of the indentation 1335 relative to the lower surface of first portion 1325 of the bottom surface may be, for example but not limited to, about 0.388". The width of the indentation 1330 may be, for example but not limited to, about 0.287", and the indentation 1335 may be offset towards a side edge of the bottom portion 1315, which corresponds to the location of the membrane-piercing needle in some brewer implementations. However, the indentation 1335 may be located in a different location when the membrane-piercing needle is positioned differently. Limiting the space occupied by the indentation 1335 (i.e., maximizing the space occupied by the first portion) results in more space within the basket 1300 for grounds, such as coffee grounds. This in turn facilitates the production of stronger blends.

FIGS. 14A-16B illustrate various exemplary lids for covering the beverage basket embodiment 1300. The respec-

tive lids are configured to selectively substantially seal the opening defined at the top of the frame **1305**. FIGS. **14A** and **14B** illustrate a first exemplary lid **1400**. The lid **1400** includes an opening **1402** in a center region through which a liquid flows into the basket **1300**. The lid **1400** also includes an annular ring **1405** configured to be friction fit against an inner surface of the rim **1310** of the frame **1305** to thereby form a seal between the lid **1400** and the beverage basket **1300**. That is, a seal between the outer surface of the annular ring **1405** and the inner surface of the rim **1310**. The diameter of the annular ring **1405** may be sized to provide a tight fit between the lid **1400** and the basket **1300** while still facilitating removal of the lid **1400**.

FIGS. **15A** and **15B** illustrate a second exemplary lid **1500**. The lid **1500** includes an opening **1502** in a center region through which a liquid flows into the basket **1300**. The lid **1500** includes a sidewall **1505** configured to be snap fit over an outer edge of the rim **1310**. In other words, the seal between the lid **1500** and the beverage basket **1300** is formed between the inner surface of the sidewall **1505** and the outer surface of the rim **1310**. The diameter of the sidewall **1505** may be sized to provide a tight fit between the lid **1500** and the basket **1300** while still facilitating removal of the lid **1500**.

FIGS. **16A** and **16B** illustrate another exemplary beverage basket **1600** and lid **1610**. The beverage basket **1600** includes the features of the beverage basket **1300** described above. However, the rim **1605** defines one or more cutouts **1612**. The lid **1610** includes one or more tracks **1615** configured to cooperate with the one or more cutouts **1612** to facilitate twist locking of the lid **1610** to the beverage basket **1600**. In this regard, the thickness of the rim **1605** may gradually increase with a distance away from the cutouts **1612** so that the tightness between the lid **1610** and the beverage basket **1600** increases with further twisting of the lid **1610**.

The configurations above may be varied. For example, as illustrated in FIG. **17**, the basket **1700** and lid **1705** shown in FIG. **14** may be formed together so that in an open configuration the lid **1705** is attached to the basket **1700**. The lid **1705** may then be folded over the basket **1700** to close the top opening of the basket **1700** defined by the rim **1710**. A cutout **1715** may be formed in the rim **1710** to expose an underside of the lid **1705** when the lid **1400** is in the closed configuration. The cutout **1715** facilitates removal of the lid **1705** from the basket **1700**.

As illustrated in FIGS. **18A** and **18B**, liquid distribution fins **1810** may be formed on the underside of the lid **1805**. During operation, liquid flowing into the lid opening will, through capillary pressure, be drawn over the liquid distribution fins **1810** and then drop onto the grounds in the basket **1800**. The liquid distribution fins **1810** distribute the liquid over a larger portion of the grounds in the basket **1800** than would occur without the use of fins **1810**. This in turn facilitates more even brewing of the beverage. It is understood that the shape and number of fins **1810** are only exemplary.

FIGS. **19A-20B** illustrate a sealed beverage basket **1900** (FIG. **19C**) and operations for forming the same. The sealed beverage basket **1900** includes a beverage basket wrapped in an outer sleeve that is made of a gas barrier material, such as aluminum foil, coated monolayer plastic films, multi-layer laminates comprising of different plastic, aluminum foil, metalized plastic, metalized paper and coated films, which acts as a high gas barrier to gasses such as nitrogen (N_2), carbon-dioxide (CO_2), Oxygen (O_2) and other aroma organic volatiles. The outer sleeve is form fit to the beverage

basket, which results in a smaller storage footprint. That is, the sealed beverage basket **1900** requires less space than some of the other embodiments.

The beverage basket may correspond to any of the described beverage basket embodiments. For example, the beverage basket may correspond to the basket **110** of FIG. **1**. In this regard, the basket **110** includes a frame and filter medium, as described above. The frame includes a rim, a bottom portion, and a group of ribs. A lid **200** may be placed on the top of the frame **128** to secure contents within the frame **128**.

FIG. **19A** illustrates a first exemplary embodiment of an outer sleeve **1905** that may be placed around the outside surface of the basket **110** and subsequently form fit to the basket **110** to thereby provide a sealed beverage basket **1900**. The outer sleeve **1905** is configured to cover at least the openings in the basket **110** through which fluid flows to thereby provide an air-tight seal within the basket **110**. The air-tight seal preserves the freshness of contents stored within the basket **110**.

In a pre-form fit stage, the sidewall of the outer sleeve **1905** may be tapered and the diameter sized to facilitate sliding of the basket **110** within the outer sleeve **1905**. The diameter along a top edge of the outer sleeve **1905** may be sized to prevent the outer sleeve **1905** from extending passed the rim of the basket **110**. The bottom of the outer sleeve **1905** may be opened or closed.

After sliding the basket **110** into the outer sleeve **1905**, an inert gas, such as nitrogen, may be injected into the interior of the basket **110** to flush out ambient air. At the same time, heat may be applied to outer sleeve **1905** to cause the outer sleeve **1905** to shrink tightly around the basket **110** to thereby form an air-tight seal that prevents ambient air from entering the basket **110**.

In some implementations, the outer sleeve **1905** may be configured to cover other areas of the basket **110**. For example, the outer sleeve **1900** may cover a portion **1920** of the lid **200**, as illustrated in FIG. **19C**. In this case, the diameter of the top edge of the outer sleeve **1905** may be sized to allow the sleeve **1905** to slide above the rim in the pre-form fit stage. This allows the sleeve to fold over the lid **200** during the form fitting process, which further secures the lid **200** to the frame of the basket **110** and provides a means for detection of tampering with the contents stored within the basket **110**. For example, a torn outer sleeve **1905** may evince tampering with the contents of the sealed beverage basket **1900**.

FIG. **19B** illustrates a second exemplary embodiment of an outer sleeve **1910** that may be placed around the outside surface of the basket **110** and subsequently form fit to the basket **110**. Like the first outer sleeve embodiment **1905**, the second outer sleeve embodiment **1910** is configured to cover at least the openings of the basket **110** through which fluid flows to thereby provide an air-tight seal within the basket **110**. The air-tight seal preserves the freshness of contents stored within the basket **110**. In some implementations, the outer sleeve **1910** may be configured to cover other areas of the beverage basket **1900**, such as a portion **1920** of the lid **200**, which may provide the advantageous features described above.

In the second embodiment, the outer sleeve **1910** is configured to be wrapped around the frame of the basket **110**, as illustrated in FIG. **19B**. In this regard, the outer sleeve **1910** is initially separated at first and second edges **1912** and is provided with an overlap amount, as illustrated by the dashed line **1915** in FIG. **19B**. The first and second edges **1912** overlap one another when the outer sleeve **1910**

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is wrapped. An adhesive may be applied to one or both edges **1912** to facilitate joining of the edges. The adhesive may be a food grade peelable pressure sensitive adhesive that does not contaminate beverage grounds stored within the basket **110**. For example, the adhesive can be acrylic based pressure sensitive adhesives. In some implementations, the edges **1912** may be joined through other suitable means, such as ultrasonic welding and the like.

The second outer sleeve embodiment **1910** may be cut from a sheet of sleeve material. Prior to cutting, graphics, labels, and the like may be printed on the sleeve material. This advantageously provides for a sealed beverage basket **1900** that includes graphics, labels, etc. on an outside surface. These in turn facilitate, for example, easy determination of the contents stored within the beverage basket **110**, the manufacturer of the beverage basket, an expiration date, or any other desired information.

As illustrated in FIGS. **20A** and **20B**, in some implementations, the outer sleeve **1905**, **1910** includes a top portion **2005** configured to completely cover the lid **200**. The top portion **2005** may be formed from the same material as the rest of the outer sleeve **1905**, **1910**. For example, the first outer sleeve embodiment **1905** may be configured to have a closed top that corresponds to the top portion **2005** and may be configured (i.e., sized) to slide over the top of the basket **110** rather than the bottom. Alternatively, the top portion **2005** may be a separate portion joined to the rest of the outer sleeve **1905**, **1910** via any of the joining processes described above, or different joining process. For example, the top portion may be joined via an adhesive, ultrasonic welding, or a different joining process.

In some implementations, the top portion **2005** may include a tab **2000** (FIG. **20A**) or notch **2010** (FIG. **20B**) to facilitate easy removal of the outer sleeve **1905**, **1910** from the basket **110**. In implementations that do not include a top portion **2005**, the outer sleeve portion that covers the openings in the beverage basket may define the tab **2000** and/or notch **2010**.

FIG. **21A** illustrates an exemplary beverage packet **2100** that may be used in connection with any of the basket embodiments described above. The beverage packet **210** is made from a flow wrap material that may be utilized to define a number of beverage packets **2100**. Each beverage packet **2100** may include a sealed beverage basket, such as the sealed beverage basket **1900**, described above. The flow wrap material may initially correspond to a tube closed at one end and with a length suited for packaging a desired number of sealed beverage baskets **1900**.

In operation, a first sealed beverage basket **1900** is inserted into the tube. The tube is then sealed above the sealed beverage basket **1900** to form a first beverage packet **2100** that holds one sealed beverage basket **1900**. A second sealed beverage basket **1900** is then inserted at the open end of the tube and sealed into the tube to provide a second beverage packet **2100**. The operations continue until the desired number of beverage packets **2100** is obtained. The tube may be perforated between beverage packets **2100** to facilitate easy separation of the beverage packets **2100**. The entire tube of beverage packet **2100** may be stored in a container **2105** for distribution and storage.

Accordingly, it will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that many more embodiments and implementations are possible that are within the scope of the claims. Moreover, the described embodiments may be combined into new embodiments that provide any of the benefits described

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herein. Therefore, the embodiments described are only provided to aid in understanding the claims and do not limit the scope of the claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A sealed beverage basket for holding beverage grounds comprising:

a frame having an outside surface which includes:
a continuous rim that defines an opening at a top of the frame;

a bottom portion that is closed;
a plurality of spaced apart ribs that extend from the rim to a peripheral edge of the bottom portion, wherein the bottom edge, plurality of ribs and rim define a plurality of openings that facilitate fluid flow;

a filter material positioned in the plurality of openings, the filter material formed of a same plastic material as the frame;

a lid member that covers the opening at the top of the frame to thereby secure the beverage grounds within the frame; and

a removable, unitary and pre-formed outer sleeve shrink-fitted to the outside surface of the frame to cover at least the plurality of openings to thereby provide a form-fitted sleeve about the frame and an air-tight seal within the frame;

wherein the outer sleeve is a pre-formed and discontinuous sleeve that includes first and second overlapping edges joined via an adhesive, said discontinuous sleeve wrapped about and shrink-fitted to the outside surface of the frame after the edges are joined to thereby form an air-tight seal within the frame.

2. The basket according to claim 1, wherein the outer sleeve is formed at least partially over the lid member.

3. The basket according to claim 1, wherein the adhesive is a food grade adhesive.

4. The basket according to claim 1, wherein the outer sleeve defines a tab or notch that facilitates peeling of the outer sleeve from the frame.

5. The basket according to claim 1, wherein the removable outer sleeve is removable from the frame thereby uncovering at least the plurality of openings without removing the lid member.

6. An air-tight beverage package comprising:

a tube of unitary flow wrap material that defines a plurality of sealed pockets; and

a sealed beverage basket for storing beverage grounds, a respective beverage basket positioned within each sealed pocket, wherein each beverage basket includes:

a frame that includes:
a continuous rim that defines an opening at a top of the frame;

a bottom portion that is closed; and
a plurality of spaced apart ribs that extend from the rim to a peripheral edge of the bottom portion, wherein the bottom edge, plurality of ribs and rim define a plurality of openings that facilitate fluid flow;

a filter material formed of a same plastic material as the frame and positioned in the plurality of openings;

a lid member that covers the opening at the top of the frame to thereby secure the beverage grounds within the frame; and

a removable, unitary and pre-formed outer sleeve shrink-fitted to an outside surface of the frame configured to cover at least the plurality of openings to thereby provide a form-fitted sleeve about the frame and an air-tight seal within the frame;

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wherein the outer sleeve is a pre-formed and discontinuous sleeve that includes first and second overlapping edges joined via an adhesive, said discontinuous sleeve wrapped about and shrink-fitted to the outside surface of the frame after the edges are joined to thereby form an air-tight seal within the frame.

7. The beverage package according to claim 6, wherein the tube of flow wrap material is perforated between adjacent pockets to facilitate controlled separation of the pockets.

8. The beverage package to claim 6, wherein the outer sleeve is formed at least partially over the lid member.

9. The beverage package according to claim 6, wherein the adhesive is a food grade adhesive.

10. The beverage package according to claim 6, wherein the outer sleeve defines a tab that facilitates peeling the outer sleeve from the basket.

11. The beverage package according to claim 6, wherein the outer sleeve defines a notch that facilitates peeling the outer sleeve from the basket.

12. A method for forming an air-tight beverage basket for holding beverage grounds comprising:

forming a frame that includes a continuous rim that defines an opening at a top of the frame, a bottom portion that is closed, and a plurality of spaced apart ribs that extend from the rim to a peripheral edge of the bottom,

wherein the bottom portion, plurality of ribs and rim define a plurality of openings that facilitate fluid flow; positioning a filter material in the plurality of openings, said filter material of the same plastic material as the frame;

providing a lid member that covers the opening at the top of the frame thereby securing the beverage grounds within the frame; and

forming a removable outer sleeve on an outside surface of the frame configured to cover at least the plurality of openings to thereby provide an air-tight seal within the frame; wherein forming the outer sleeve comprises:

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providing a preformed, unitary sleeve configured to slide over the frame;

injecting an inert gas into an interior space of the frame to thereby remove ambient air from within the interior space; and

simultaneously applying heat to the outer sleeve to thereby shrink the outer sleeve onto and around the frame;

wherein the outer sleeve is a wrap-around sleeve with first and second ends, and the method further comprises: applying an adhesive on at least one of the first and second ends; wrapping the outer sleeve around the basket until one end overlaps the other end to thereby join the opposite ends; injecting an inert gas into an interior space of the frame to thereby remove ambient air from within the interior space; and simultaneously applying heat to the outer sleeve to thereby shrink the outer sleeve around the frame.

13. The method according to claim 12, wherein the adhesive is a food grade adhesive.

14. The method according to claim 12, wherein the outer sleeve defines a tab or notch that facilitates peeling the outer sleeve from the frame.

15. The method according to claim 12 further comprising forming a plurality of sealed pockets using a tube of a unitary flow wrap material, wherein the plurality of sealed pockets each contains a sealed beverage basket with removable outer sleeve and lid member.

16. The method according to claim 12 further comprising: inserting the beverage basket into a tube of a unitary flow wrap material;

sealing the tube of flow wrap material at a top side of the frame; and

sealing the tube of flow wrap material at a bottom side of the frame thereby forming a sealed pocket of the tube of flow wrap material.

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